



City of Gaithersburg Press Release

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For Immediate Release

Innovative, Sustainable Green Practices Recognized with Gaithersburg Environmental Awards

Gaithersburg, MD (April 1, 2021) As part of Green Month, the City of Gaithersburg recognizes individuals and organizations demonstrating outstanding environmental stewardship in the Gaithersburg community with Environmental Awards. Winners are being highlighted virtually on social media on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#) @GburgMD.

This year's Green Month includes a variety of virtual and socially distanced in-person activities to help protect and preserve our environment. Offerings include a "No Straw Pledge," park clean-ups, a screening of the film "Wasted! The Story of Food Waste," a self-guided tree tour of Morris Park, and discussions about the Potomac watershed, pesticide free lawn care, and much more. [Explore all Green Month activities here.](#)

For this year's Environmental Awards, the City's Environmental Affairs Committee (EAC) selected eight achievement winners, six appreciation award winners and two Green Friend of Gaithersburg winners, including individuals, businesses and nonprofit and faith-based organizations. Collectively, the winners are growing our local green economy, improving their business models with sustainable initiatives, working within their neighborhoods, and inspiring a new green generation.

Achievement Award Winners

Fitzgerald Auto Mall – Organization, Achievement Award

Fitzgerald Auto Mall continued to be mindful of waste despite the rapidly changing COVID-19 safety protocols. On top of continuing to manage its onsite solar, bio-retention ponds and already expansive recycling program, Fitzgerald Auto Mall purchased all of its hand sanitizer in bulk barrels from local sources and refilled individual bottles that are placed throughout the facility. Support of local businesses and eliminating waste from all those plastic bottles earned Fitzgerald Auto Mall an Achievement Award for 2021.

ClimateEDU – Organization, Achievement

ClimateEDU began in July of 2020. In its less than one year of existence it has developed a program designed to educate middle and high school students on climate issues. The eight unit, online asynchronous material program allows students to engage and be inspired at their own pace. It can be done independently or as part of a virtual classroom. The ClimateEDU team is working with an MCPS curriculum specialist to implement the program countywide. To learn more about the course and provide support, visit climatedu.org or join the

1,300 people who follow @climateEDUteam on Instagram for access to weekly infographics and information on emerging climate news.

Lakelands Community Association – Organization, Achievement

From February to October 2020, the Lakelands Community Association planned and installed a strategic, centrally located pollinator paradise. The attractive landscape design replaced 3,800 square feet of turf grass with indigenous plants that creates habitat for pollinators and birds, manages stormwater, increases biodiversity in the area, and encourages residents to talk about a native landscape. Stroll down the Butterfly Commons to see why the Lakeland's Community Association received an Achievement Award this year.

Bettina Thompson – Individual, Achievement

Bettina Thompson is Vice President of the Lakelands Community Association Board of Directors. Not only did she embrace a Butterfly Commons Project, she expanded upon it by working with the Lakelands Community landscapers to use plants indigenous to Maryland in common area green spaces. Bettina has also been actively involved in the Kentlands Go Green Foundation, where residents learn from the foundation's projects and hopefully get inspired to embrace native landscaping. Bettina's commitment to continually embracing environmental best practices earned her this Achievement Award.

Deborah Sarabia – Individual, Achievement

As President of the Seneca Creek Watershed Partnership, Deby Sarabia has worked closely with the City for the past year to inspire her neighbors to get involved with water quality improvement projects. Deby coordinated a stream stroll for the community to get to know the watershed better. On top of community-wide advocacy, Deby's passion for improving water quality was reflected in her own backyard when she implemented a pollinator paradise garden.

Karl Van Neste – Individual, Achievement

Karl Van Neste is a community leader committed to engaging with people by sharing knowledge about road salt impact on our water resources. Karl has inspired a group of citizen scientists to monitor chloride levels in the water. He coordinated a training event for an HOA and advocates for statewide road salt reduction legislation. Karl is a successful communicator, inspiring friends, family and neighbors to get involved with his passion project by using environmentally-favorable practices all winter long.

Muddy Branch Alliance – Organization, Achievement

The Muddy Branch Alliance, a perennial award winner, continues to impress with its actions. Despite COVID-19 restrictions, the Alliance was able to host several clean-up, weed warrior and virtual educational events this year. Other highlights include the successful installation of a 7,500 square foot conservation/rain garden that will serve as a prime location for education visits in the future. Its first ever native plant sale sold more than 600 plants in 48 hours using a safe, online ordering system. We can't wait to see what they do next year.

Asbury Methodist Village – Organization, Achievement

Despite the obvious operational struggles of serving a high risk population during a pandemic, Asbury Methodist Village (AMV) did not waiver on its commitment to the environment. The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in a need to deliver 800 meals a days, generating a significant amount of trash and recycling. In May of 2020, AMV invested \$40,000 in a reusable to-go food service system that entirely eliminated waste from the process. The system tracks, retrieves, washes and sanitizes these containers on a daily basis. AMV's work demonstrates the passion, dedication and commitment to its own future and that of the entire community.

Appreciation Award Winners

Karen Lottes – Individual, Appreciation Award

Karen Lottes is a Program Coordinator with the Gaithersburg Community Museum. She was nominated by residents who were impressed by her innovation and support of the virtual Green Cocktails program. In this monthly series, Karen identifies a local expert to break down an aspect of sustainability, pairing it with a cocktail recommendation from a local distillery, turning this sometimes daunting subject into something fun and interesting. Talking about sustainability regularly is a key component of making real change. Like the [Gaithersburg Community Museum](#) Facebook page for program information.

Gateway Commons HOA – Organization, Appreciation

The Gateway Commons HOA recognizes that environmental best practices are not just an “install and walk away” process. The area around the stormwater management pond on the property was overgrown and littered with trash. The HOA partnered with a local landscaper to remove dead trees and overgrowth and create space for the existing trees to thrive. The trash from the area was cleaned up and suddenly the eyesore that plagued the area became a beautifully scenic amenity.

Jane, Ellie and Caroline Stasko – Individual, Appreciation

Jane Stasko and her two daughters, Ellie and Caroline, were nominated for an environmental award for their work to collect litter along Muddy Branch Road. With the pandemic limiting the opportunity for large group clean-up events, the Stasko’s took it upon themselves to maintain this area all year long. They were approached by police officers and residents alike, thanking them for their efforts.

Daniel Dropik – Individual, Appreciation

Daniel Dropik served as an intern for the City’s Stormwater team this year. He took on the difficult task of explaining environmental issues and best practices in a way that anyone could understand. You can see an example of Daniel’s work in the spring edition of *inGaithersburg Magazine* (available [online](#) in mid-April) where he talks about the City’s Pesticide Law. For additional information about our pesticide law we invite you to visit our [webpage](#) or join us for a [pesticide-free lawn care chat](#) on April 8.

Jackie McNulty – Individual, Appreciation

Jackie McNulty has turned her backyard into a haven for birds, butterflies and pollinators. Her successful native garden allowed her to start sharing seeds and plants from her own garden with her neighbors. Beyond plants and seeds, Jackie provides much needed advice and guidance to novice native plant gardeners. She is much appreciated by the EAC.

Lynn Nash – Individual, Appreciation

Non-native invasive plants pose a serious threat to our trees. Lynn Nash has volunteered her time to learn how to become a weed warrior to protect our tree canopy. As a member of the Saybrooke HOA Arbor Committee, Lynn has worked to ensure that her neighborhood tree canopy cover stays healthy and continues to grow. Fighting invasive plants can seem like a never ending problem, but they are no match for Lynn’s resolve. The EAC and Gaithersburg’s native trees appreciate her efforts.

Green Friends of Gaithersburg Award Winners

Interfaith Partners for the Chesapeake (IPC) – Organization, Green Friends of Gaithersburg Award

The IPC has received the Green Friends of Gaithersburg Award for its efforts to create strong, successful green teams within the congregation and with businesses throughout the Chesapeake Bay Watershed. The Watershed is home to more than 18 million people and 19,000 religious/faith based congregations. By tapping into the strong network of these congregations, the IPC has been able to raise awareness and mobilize the

power of people to restore clean water and work toward environmental justice. The IPC helped five congregations in Gaithersburg (representing Catholic, Episcopal, Unitarian, Methodist and Muslim faiths) develop their own green teams and provides support in helping congregations plan, pay for and install projects for their communities, like rain gardens and native plantings. The IPC is a great partner and a very Green Friend. To connect with the IPC please visit the organization on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

Larissa Johnson – Individual, Green Friend of Gaithersburg

Larissa Johnson is the Residential Energy Program Manager with Montgomery Energy Connection. She brings an energy and enthusiasm whenever she talks to students about helping the environment. Larissa gets the students motivated and energized about conserving energy, helping to make Gaithersburg an environmentally friendly and safe place in which to live. She teaches students simple things they can do every day to protect the environment, arming them with resources and information they can use and share with their family and friends to generate discussions and actions to protect the environment. Larissa leaves a lasting impression on the students that leads them to be good energy and water stewards, both inside and outside the home. She also provides environmental leadership training to high school students that leaves a lasting impression.

For more information on the City of Gaithersburg's environmental programs please contact the Environmental Services Division at 301-258-6370 or e-mail environment@gaithersburgmd.gov.

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